

Section 5 – Expedited Port Clearance

The quick and efficient clearance through the U.S. Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (BCBP) that is provided to a designated person upon his/her arrival at the first point of entry into the United States is termed “expedited port clearance.” The courtesies extended are in accordance with the provisions of the VCDR and VCCR, Tariff Schedules of the United States, and other related treaties and agreements, and include any other eligible persons accompanying the designated individual as well as the accompanying baggage and effects of the entire party.

Although the Office of Protocol is the initial contact and processing office for requests for expedited port clearance, it is ultimately a BCBP-related function. Because OFM/Customs is the liaison with BCBP concerning official foreign government personnel entering the United States, processing requirements are included in this publication.

5.1 Processing Requests

A written request for expedited port clearance must be submitted by the embassy or international organization to the Office of Protocol, allowing sufficient time for processing. The Office of Protocol will determine the category of expedited port clearance to be conferred in accordance with the following.

5.2 Categories

- High ranking government official
 - Chief of State (such as President, King, or Queen), or head of government (such as prime minister)
 - Vice President, cabinet member, or other government official (such as governor or mayor)
 - Advance security teams and members of the high-ranking government official’s accompanying party
- Distinguished foreign visitor

- Member of a royal family
 - Spouse and immediate family members of Chief of State/Head of Government traveling alone
 - Others, so designated by the Office of Protocol
- Other personnel entitled to expedited port clearance when approved by the Office of Protocol
 - Staff members of international organizations (under Public Law 291), diplomatic and consular officers
 - UN diplomatic officers, Organization of American States diplomatic officers and other international organization special representatives.

NOTE: Security concerns connected with the visits of high ranking government officials and other distinguished foreign visitors and their accompanying security personnel must be coordinated through the following:

Office of Protocol
Visits Division
phone: (202) 647-4074 or (202) 647-4072
fax: (202) 647-0722

5.3 Information Which Must Be Provided for Processing

The following information should be provided to the Office of Protocol when requesting expedited port clearance:

- Name, title, date of birth and passport number of person for whom the expedited port clearance is requested
- Numbers of persons in the party; their names, titles, dates of birth and passport numbers
- The exact date, time, and place of arrival
- The means of arrival; if by air, the request should include:
 - Type of aircraft (private, military, chartered, or commercial)

- Call sign and/or tail number for private, military, or chartered flights
- Flight number of commercial aircraft
- Airport or airfield where the aircraft will land.

NOTE: Flight information for private or chartered aircraft landing at U.S. military bases and foreign military aircraft overflying and landing anywhere in the United States or its territories must be confirmed with the Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs to ensure that clearance to fly over U.S. airspace and to land in the United States has been granted.

Questions regarding airport greeting procedures for an arriving dignitary or a newly arrived member of an embassy should be directed to the Department of State, Office of Protocol, ATTN: Visits.

NOTE: The granting of expedited port clearance does not, of itself or in any way, convey diplomatic privileges to any person.